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ABSTRACT

Student council advisors walk a tightrope, forced to balance student suspicions against administration and faculty disapproval. This book takes a hard look at the role of the advisor in the 70's. In making a strong case for the need to elevate the activities program to full curricular status, the author emphasizes the "learning by doing" aspect of student council and other non-classroom activities. He suggests how to assist without manipulating, how to let students fail occasionally, and how to understand the legal issues involved in dealing with student councils. (Author/PC)

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NOW YOU'RE IN THE MIDDLE

A HANDBOOK FOR THE STUDENT COUNCIL ADVISER

BY
KENT M. KEITH

NEW DIRECTIONS FOR STUDENT COUNCILS

NUMBER 17

CG 009 652

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Now You're in the Middle

A Handbook for the Student Council Adviser

by Kent M. Keith

National Association of Secondary School Principals
1201 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036

To Dr. Donald I. Wood

with thanks

for showing the way

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Foreword

Student council advisers walk the tightrope. Forced to balance student suspicions against administration and faculty disapproval, advisers tread lightly, trying to please as many of the people as much of the time as possible.

The National Association of Student Councils has long recognized the precarious, as well as richly rewarding and exciting, nature of the task. In 1963, the Association launched the New Directions for Student Councils series with William Sterner's *The Student Council Adviser*, a book devoted to the many-faceted role of the adviser in his dealings with the various groups within the secondary school. During the last decade, that book served advisers around the country as a practical and informative handbook in the performance of their duties.

Now You're in the Middle by Kent Keith is a natural follow-up. Highly readable, the book takes a new, hard, and thoughtful look at the role of the adviser in the Seventies. In making a strong case for the need to elevate the activities program to full curricular status, the author emphasizes the "learning-by-doing" aspect of student council and other non-classroom activities. His advice on how to suggest without dictating, how to assist without manipulating, and, perhaps most difficult, how to let students fail occasionally is invaluable.

From salaries to legal issues to dealing with the student council "supermen" Kent Keith's approach is sympathetic, practical, and humane. It is our hope that advisers – those with years of experience in the field as well as those just beginning – will find a new resourse of information within these pages.

Owen B. Kiernan
Secretary
National Association of Student Councils
Executive Secretary
National Association of Secondary School Principals

Author's Preface

The world of the student council adviser is one of the most delightfully frustrating and uncomfortably satisfying worlds that exist today in our secondary schools. This book is designed to serve a double purpose: to orient the new adviser to the student council field, its problems, and its resources; and to provide the experienced adviser with a few new perspectives on his position.

The impetus for this work came from the privilege of keynoting the annual convention of the California Association of Directors of Activities at San Francisco in February, 1970. Parts of the speech, entitled "Giving Hope to a Generation," appear in this text. In Chapters Three and Six, I have incorporated portions of an article written for the National Association of Secondary School Principals *Bulletin* ("The Principal and the Student Council," September, 1971); and in Chapter Four, I have incorporated sections of an article written for the NASC *Student Life Highlights* ("Will Student Councils Die?" November, 1969).

The first draft of this book was published to be critiqued by the San Diego city schools in December, 1970. My special thanks to Bill Matthie, Gene Brucker, and the two dozen other fine educators of that school system who distributed, evaluated, and collected the first draft for my use in producing the final text.

At NASC, I am grateful for the help of Owen Kiernan, Robert Fitzsimmons, Terry Giroux, and Judy Martin.

Finally, I would like to thank George Arashiro, who was my adviser during my year as student body president at Roosevelt High School in Honolulu. His patience was remarkable.

K.M.K.
July, 1971

CHAPTER ONE:

Teaching How as Well as What

One of the serious shortcomings of today's secondary schools is that much of the teaching is focused on *what*, instead of how. We've devoted ourselves to facts, multiple choice exams, SAT scores, and grade point averages. We've said that academic work is the "real" work of the school, and that the students who are outstanding academically are the "best" students. Schools all over the country carry their reverence for grade point averages to extremes: in some cases school enrollments are listed by grade point averages and the information posted on massive bulletin boards in the school hallways.

Educators are fond of saying that their schools "prepare students for later life." If our schools are to do this, then our adulation for academics is an ironic deception. Government statistics* show clearly that of the students starting fifth grade in 1959, only 72 percent graduated from high school in 1967; only 40 percent started college; and only 20 percent were likely to earn four-year degrees. It is my guess that only half of those graduating from college (10 percent will undertake careers based heavily on academic subject matter; probably only a fourth (five percent) will receive advanced degrees and become "professionals" in their fields.

The meaning of these statistics is clear. Academic disciplines are not the future lifework of the vast majority of our students. Any school interested in preparing students for later life cannot focus primarily on academics. Certainly, we want all students to achieve the basic skills in reading, writing, and computation. But after a point, academic work may be good training only for more academic work. Since 60 percent of America's students don't even start college, the majority of our students are left struggling through subjects that they are not apt to use after graduation. Forcing students through courses they don't want is a colossal waste of man-hours; it is boring to students and teachers alike; and it

* See *Digest of Educational Statistics*, November, 1968. U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Office of Education, p. 7.

convinces many young people that, as people, they "just don't have what it takes"—when in fact, their forte may and often does lie elsewhere.

While we can expect only 20 percent of our students to graduate from college, and perhaps only five percent to be professional academicians, we should expect *all* of our high school graduates to be good citizens; to be good community members, good church members, employees, parents, neighbors; to vote intelligently, to speak up when necessary; to organize from time to time in their own interests and the interests of a dynamic democracy. These basic skills of living in a complex society are not taught in the academic curriculum. We require "civics," but there is a vast difference between describing government and participating in it.

The activities program is designed to be the action *how* to complement the academic *what*. The idea is not that academic subjects are bad—but they're not enough. There must be strong interaction between theory and experience; between doing something and learning why it happened the way it did.

Very few students in our high schools know why they are there, except that high school is something you do before college, or something that the law requires. It is not surprising that there has been an increasing demand for "relevance" in our schools. Actually, the problem may not be so much that subjects are not relevant, but that they have so little basis in a student's own experience that *he* can't see why they are important. He sits in class, stares out the window, turns a few pages in his textbook, twiddles his thumbs, and goes home. Later, after graduating, when he has to manage his own life and *do* things, he often wishes that he had been paying attention. The cure is not to force attention and shove material down a student's throat. A student who doesn't want to learn will certainly not learn. The cure is to make it possible for a student to do things while he is in school: to engage in "real experience" so that he discovers his needs while there is time, material, and personnel available for him to fulfill those needs.

One of the benefits of beginning by doing is that it preserves much of the natural enthusiasm that young people have for learning. Kids want to learn. When they're small, they'll ask hundreds of questions each day. What happens to this native enthusiasm? Some of it is smothered by textbooks. The problem with so much book learning is that it seems dead—the issues are all resolved; here is the answer; and the student must simply memorize and stash away the following details for a distant reward on the final exam. This deadening and postponing of the reward for knowledge may be too much for the student who is just getting started—it may kill his interest entirely. A student needs to commit himself to a subject.

Being able to relate it directly to his own experience is by far the best way to get that commitment.

By providing immediate and direct experience, a student is given an opportunity to discover for himself what he needs to know. It is then that he is ready to sit down and dig into the academic programs which can be of the most use to him. The process of education can begin as fieldwork, and the academic disciplines can be the food and water that keep the fieldworkers nourished. The food and water will be meaningless until students do enough hard work to get hungry and thirsty!

The activities program can be the area of the school curriculum where the *doing* begins. The fellow interested in photography, for example, may begin by joining the Photography Club and clicking photos with other young photographers, talking with them, learning from them, and visiting photo exhibits. A well-known local photographer might be invited to give a "mini-course" on camera technique; or, if personnel and facilities are available, a course in photography and darkroom technique could be set up. At each step, the student who is striving to increase his proficiency is rewarded with a tangible product of his own making; and, as he improves, he digests more of the kind of academic knowledge which gives his own work form and significance.

Commonly, the activities program grows out of the instructional program as well as feeding back into it. For example, language clubs may expand the classroom to include the presentation of plays or skits, the celebration of holidays closely related to languages and the countries where they are spoken, or the visits of people in the area who are native speakers of the language. These activities may in turn motivate the more usual type of classroom activities—perhaps practice on a specialized vocabulary list, study of certain idiomatic expressions, or the reading of more current literature.

In each case, the activities program can provide (1) camaraderie, a small student community of similar interests; (2) projects and activities directly related to those interests; and (3) a way of becoming committed to an interest, or developing an interest to the point that more formal training is desired. The activities program is thus both a stimulus to, and an extension of, the academic curriculum.

Through student council, clubs, and special projects, students can learn how to work with each other and achieve more than if they had worked alone. Through the activities program, students can learn *how* to do things—in a way which preserves interest, gives a foundation to the academic curriculum, and makes high school or junior high school a time of action instead of a "waiting period" before going to college or taking a job. Your task as the student council adviser is to help the council supervise this program—to

defend it, stimulate it, and help build it until it is a full partner with the academic curriculum. In this task, you face the challenge of reaching the entire student body. Your reward is knowing that you may have contributed more to the development of the future lives of students than any other person in the school.

CHAPTER TWO:

Now You're in the Middle

The position of student council adviser was carefully designed to guarantee that the person filling it would receive the maximum amount of flak from the maximum number of people over the maximum number of issues. An adviser at a large school was asked what talent he thought was important to being a successful adviser. "Knowing how to duck," he said simply.

There is no doubt that the student council adviser finds himself in some aggravating crossfires. Students will be critical when you "preach the administration line." Administrators will be critical when you "defend those irresponsible kids," and faculty members will be critical in general. Your job is clearly that of a mediator. Welcome aboard—now you're in the middle!

Many advisers find conflicts in loyalties in their jobs: do you side with the students, or the administrators, or the faculty? The answer is quite simple: as adviser you have a loyalty to the school—and its goal of producing creative, well-functioning students. Your responsibilities might best be described as follows:

Guiding Students. The student council adviser is responsible for providing guidance to the student activities program in general and the student council in particular. The role is one of providing information about possibilities and alternatives—without making student decisions or threatening to veto them. The adviser's concern should be that students follow good leadership procedures. For example, if a student handbook is to be printed, the concern of the adviser should be that the student decision-making process include decisions regarding what the content will be, who will write it, what printing services are available, what the costs are, how it will be paid for, and how many should be made available and to whom. Once he is sure that the decision-making process is thorough, the adviser steps back and the students decide: the handbook will be 48 pages, it will cover school rules and the student council constitution, it will be written by a special council committee, it will cost 22 cents a copy, it will be paid for out of the student council budget, and each member of the school will be given one.

During a council or committee meeting, it is best if the adviser speaks only when spoken to. If he has a point to make, he should wait a while and see if a student doesn't pop up with the same point. In any case, if the adviser interrupts the presiding officer, some resentment may be created. Each member of the council will be different; each will need to be advised in different ways. Guidance given before and after meetings will be far more readily accepted whatever the individual problems.

Informing the Administration. The adviser is in a large sense an "agent" for the administration. As such, he needs to know the attitudes of the school administrators, the school and district codes, and school law. This information must be conveyed to the student council and studied carefully by its members. At the same time, the adviser needs to make sure the administration is provided with information on the ideas and activities of the student council. After each student council meeting, preferably after the minutes of the meeting have been typed and delivered, he and the student council officers should meet with the principal to explain actions taken. This meeting can be short, but it should occur on a regular basis. If called upon to explain student council actions, the adviser need not champion student views as his own. It is his responsibility, however, to explain or represent those views as honestly as possible, so that they are seriously and adequately considered.

The council has nothing to lose by involving the principal in its program. Before the student council votes on the handbook, for example, it would be a good idea to get the principal's views. He will have the final say, no matter what happens. If he participates in planning and is thus informed about the project, he is more apt to be a staunch supporter. If he kills a project in its early stages, then it simply saves the time and effort which might have gone into perfecting a plan he would have ultimately vetoed. By increased contact with the principal, students are less apt to think of him as someone "in there" who doesn't understand their problems, and the principal is less apt to feel threatened by the new student proposals suddenly thrown at him for approval or disapproval.

Educating the Faculty. I have seen few schools in which the majority of the teachers knew the value, in theory or in practice, of the activities program and the student council. The activities program is seen as a hindrance, play-time, sandbox government, nothing important. An adviser will often be confronted with teachers who are upset because one of the student council officers missed 10 minutes of class time—or even a whole period. "We can never have a good class, because Jim gets up in the middle of it and gives me a pass and walks out." You'll get the cold treatment from the faculty for far worse reasons: most faculties are opposed to increased responsibility for the council, because activities are just

play-time stuff, whereas their *own* subjects are "the real work of the school." Most faculties will also eye you with suspicion because you may not carry the same course load. "You've got all that free time, while the rest of us are hard at work *teaching*."

The problem is very simple yet very difficult: to educate the faculty members. As quietly and effectively as possible, you should begin to do just that. In the teacher's dining room, at PTA meetings, at faculty meetings, whenever you can, defend the concept of students in action. In many cases, just being a sincere believer and having the nerve to stand up and be counted will make the point. Many faculties have never heard activities either explained or defended.

Best of all, work to involve more teachers in the activities program itself. Find the teachers with special hobby interests who might become good club advisers. Have students explain council programs at faculty meetings and PTA meetings, and encourage dialogue between students and teachers. Set up student-faculty committees on curriculum, or some other phase of school life. The more teachers who can watch and work with students outside of the classroom, the better chance you have of gaining support for the activities program.

The list of personal qualities that a student council adviser should have is usually pages long. Actually, you need three things:

- A belief in the ability of students to be creative and responsible.
- A belief in the activities program as a complement to the academic curriculum.
- An understanding of the administrative process in your school.

Other qualities, such as patience and nerve, are also recommended.

CHAPTER THREE:

Teaching Indirectly by Hindsight

It is often said that too many teachers teach subjects instead of students, and that too many students study the teacher instead of the subject. As long as teachers stand in front of the class and do all the talking, and students sit at their desks and do all the listening, the classroom "contest" is likely to continue. An effective solution might be to make students, rather than teachers, the performers in class. This would make class more interesting for the students, and take the load off the teacher as the ultimate "truthsayer." The teacher might become a director of learning or guide in the classroom who helps the students perform better. This could develop a relationship in which students and teachers are working for a common goal—experimenting, analyzing, correcting mistakes, learning.

The advantage of being a teacher in the activities program is that many of these conditions exist already. The classroom is gone, and the adviser is almost required to guide instead of teach. This makes the job of council adviser a shock for many classroom teachers. The students don't come in and sit in the same seats every day. They don't all smile and take copious notes and polish the apple. Suddenly, you have no forum but a near chaos of individual students rushing about trying to run their activities. You have to compete for attention. And the old line that "I know more about this because I've studied it longer than you have" just won't work at all.

Instead of controlling, the adviser begins by sitting on the sidelines. He observes how different students relate to each other; how they do their jobs, how they plan or don't plan, what they think is important, and how they are motivated. When he discovers what he thinks are some problems, he tries to develop ways in which students can arrive at their own awareness of the problem—perhaps through resource people or books, but most likely through a particular activity—such as one that flops.

And they will flop. An adviser, in dealing with his student council, faces the same problem as a good parent. He must have the wisdom to teach the student council all it needs to know, and the

patience to let the student council go out and prove it all to itself the hard way.

After all, no one likes being told. Everyone wants to *experience*. Why should you believe someone else's experience? You want to go out and have your own. It is said that the problem of youth is that young people never take the time to read the minutes of the last meeting. They are busy thinking up what the *next* minutes are going to be. We've already taught them about the Wright brothers (flying is impossible), Hiroshima (the atom can't be split), and biology (the heart is too vital an organ to be transplanted). Why shouldn't they believe the sky's the limit? Young people know that the past is prologue. You can tell your student body president that Project X has failed for 11 years in a row, but he'll shrug it off. *He's* going to be different. You can tell him that the last 11 student body presidents thought the same thing, but why should he care? He's not *them*. He hasn't had *his* experience yet.

This is just wonderful for everyone except the principal and adviser, who have to sit and watch Project X fall on its face each year. You'll begin to feel like the mythological Sisyphus who was condemned to Hades, where his eternal task was to roll a huge stone to the top of a hill, only to have it roll back down as soon as he reached the top. On the other hand, we don't complain when a new algebra class starts by making all the same mistakes as the last one. We know that, sooner or later, the students will learn. They will learn best in the activities program if, instead of preaching about other people's experience, we help the student leader come to a clear view and understanding of his *own* experience. This can only be done after he has *had* the experience. Students will always need guidance, but this guidance should be applied to solving problems—not preventing them from arising.

It is very important to remember that an adviser does not need to agree with students all the time. He *shouldn't* be one of their gang. What is important is that, when he disagrees, he doesn't force students to follow. He doesn't hold sanctions against students he thinks are wrong. He must be capable of stating his feelings, presenting the knowledge that he has accumulated from experience, and yet sincerely saying at the end, "But no two student councils are alike, and you may very well be able to make it work where it didn't before." His goal should be to help students *understand* the choices they are making, rather than making them choose as he would.

Once the adviser gives up being magistrate and no longer cuts off activities which he personally dislikes, the students can view him as an information giver, a resource, someone who has more experience and can be called upon in periods of confusion to try to clear the air. Then when the adviser speaks up of his own accord, it will be viewed as an attempt to help, to provide more knowledge, to improve the

program. Students will know that the adviser is on their side in that he wants them to learn, enjoy, decide, and fail or succeed on their own – and he's going to let them. When he disagrees on policy, it is part of his personal sincerity and integrity to speak up. Students will respect him when his power is the power of his ideas; they will turn him off when his power is administrative power used against them when disagreement occurs.

Because it is not a classroom situation, most of the adviser's teaching will be indirect. And because most students want to take up projects in spite of the foresight which the adviser offers, most of the big lessons will be learned after the fact, when the students also have the benefit of hindsight. Because these two techniques eliminate the teacher-student contest and allow learning to be grounded in direct experience, this "teaching indirectly by hindsight" may be the best teaching technique available. Mastering it is the supreme challenge of the activities adviser.

PART TWO: STUDENT COUNCIL PROBLEMS

CHAPTER FOUR:

The Anything and Everything Council

As activities advisers, the first thing we must be aware of is the deadwood that clutters most student council programs today. We have thousands of hopelessly confused "Anything and Everything Councils" which do too many things and very few of them well. This situation occurs most often when student council members are not clear as to just what a student council is supposed to be doing. Failing to understand the unique potential of the group, its members naturally substitute their own interests for those of the council itself. This produces confusion and overload. At state conventions, the pantheon of topics which interest energetic student leaders is immense. How about foreign wars? Fluoridation? Our relations with South America? The environment? The list is endless.

What is noticeable is that there is a definite avoidance of discussions on school problems. The author attended one convention, for example, in which a discussion group on the student council *in the school* was only one of 10 groups—and even *this* group switched over to a discussion of community projects after the first 20 minutes.

This overload of interests on the part of the student council members points up a crucial question. Should members look out toward society, or inward, back into their schools? It is my contention that they must look back into their schools, or cease to exist as meaningful student councils.

Certainly, young leaders should be encouraged to think about local, national, and international issues. But these interests can be better developed by other organizations. What we must ask ourselves is: What is the student council *specially* qualified to do? What can it clearly do *better* than other organizations? If the answer is "nothing," then student councils deserve to be disbanded. If, on the other hand, there is a special niche the student council can fill better than any other group, then that niche—and that niche alone—should be the focus of the student council's activities.

My own feeling is that the student council has been given a special place in school affairs. Its position there is enviable. As a body representing student interests, it can help to create in school those things which students want. It can represent the student case for change. At the same time, as a body recognized by the administration and faculty, it enjoys a pivotal position which can help it to interpret administration attitudes to the student body and to coordinate both student and faculty cooperation in school reform. In short, the student council is recognized by most groups in school as a legitimate agent in the educational process.

With this special position in the school, what should a student council focus on? I believe that it should declare that its main business is education. It should work to provide an atmosphere for learning in which as many students as possible can learn as much as possible. The successful student council encourages learning, promotes morale, and initiates and serves as moderator for changes in the educational process. It works to bring students, teachers, and administrators closer together into a constructive school community. This is done primarily through the activities program, which the student council presides over, constantly striving to make it as meaningful as possible for the entire student body.

Student councils must remember that they can promote many student interests without pursuing all those interests themselves. Councils ought to let the service clubs do the fund-raising or community projects; let the political science club do the lobbying on local issues; let the civics class debate the foreign wars. Those are areas in which clubs and classes have special strength. The special strength of the council, on the other hand, is to discover new interests, set up programs to implement them, and gain faculty and student support for them. At that point, it should turn the program over to another group of students to actually run the program. This maximizes student council strength, and then it maximizes student participation.

The student council can help get everything done without all of it being done in the council. Student councils were not meant to be all things to all people—rather, they were meant to help all people be all the things they would like to be.

If the real task of the student council is to help provide an atmosphere in which as many students as possible can learn as much as possible, then its prime goal must be to help each individual in the school benefit from his school experience. It is here that student councils discover a very uncomfortable fact: the majority of the

student body is not being reached by the educational process. We call this unreached group "The Silent Majority."*

They come to school in the morning, late, arriving just before the last bell. They wander through the school day, wondering why the teachers are saying what they are—or, more relevantly—wondering what interesting things may happen after school. The classroom is hot; other people always do the talking; the chairs are uncomfortable; the teacher is boring. Many of them make good grades—but they don't know why. It's just something you're supposed to do. Others do not make good grades—they were convinced long ago that they have no talent and they no longer try. The Silent Majority knows that one should go to school—but only as a duty. That's all. The bell rings and the day's duty is done. Off to better things.

Surveys and studies indicate that students drop out of school because there is nothing *in* school that interests them. One study found that two-thirds of the dropouts in question were not involved in any school activities.** This finding adds emphasis to the need for reaching the Silent Majority. It is not only a matter of enriching an individual student's educational experience, but also a question of whether or not that experience will continue at all.

It is my belief that reaching the Silent Majority is the most relevant thing that any student council could do in any given year under almost any circumstances.

How do you reach the unreached? First, by letting the Silent Majority into the mainstream of school life. Most councils, for example, don't represent more than 20 percent of the student body. Educators have been talking for years about the need for more representative councils, and it is time someone listened to them. Should we really be surprised when unrepresented students set up an underground press or stage protest demonstrations? Students want to be heard, and they want action. The student council could be an outlet for their energy, rather than a road block. There should be no grade-point requirements or teacher approvals necessary for a student who wishes to run for student council office. The student should only have to be a full-time registered student of the school. *Period.*

Second, the student council should get out into the school. Reaching students is not a matter of putting up posters, giving speeches, or having open house days. The Silent Majority is not a group which responds to one-way communications. They must be reached on a person-to-person basis where communication can be

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* See Kent M. Keith's *The Silent Majority: The Problem of Apathy and the Student Council.* Washington, D.C.: NASC, 1971. 56 pp.

** See Grace Graham's *Improving Student Participation.* Washington, D.C.: NASC, 1966. 50 pp.

two-way. This means that student council members should try to meet and get to know five or six members of the Silent Majority each year. It is a slow process, involving casual meetings and the building up of rapport between two people with different attitudes. The student council member communicates through his own sincerity. As a friendship is established, the council member may learn what members of the Silent Majority really consider relevant—and thus what the council can do to help out. Also, he may be able to bring the Silent Majority member into school activities as they become available and appropriate to the student's own interests.

Thus, by letting the Silent Majority in and getting the student council out into the school, the council becomes more representative, more relevant, and more effective in its prime activity: making the school a better place where more can learn. It is my belief that councils which fail to reach the Silent Majority will cease to exist in the coming years.

CHAPTER FIVE:

The Organizational Acrobats

It would be safe to say that no two student councils in America operate alike. Differences in school traditions and personalities assure that even councils which appear alike on paper will operate differently. This is as it should be. There is no perfect student council, no platonic form floating in the sky, waiting to be fulfilled by student councils on earth.

On the other hand, there are some noticeable similarities in student council structures, and those similarities seem to be mostly in the area of complex organizational charts. Part of this is due to the fact that student council members themselves enjoy complex structures. It seems sophisticated to have a lot of boards and committees and councils. Besides, any organization which is unsure what it is supposed to do will often turn attention away from goals and toward organizational structures. "What we need to do is get organized," people say, when in fact what they need to do is establish goals which will make sense of their organization.

The concern of the activities adviser should be to help students arrive at a structure which is the most effective for their particular school. Some points to consider are:

(1) *Simplicity.* This cannot be overstressed. Many student councils are inoperable because they are too complex, require too much coordination time, and have too many "veto pockets" where disagreement among a few people may stall the entire council. Often, these structures are the result of the creation of an "ideal constitution" by students and faculty—a constitution which looks good on paper, but which in action bogs down quickly.

In *Extra-Curricular Activities in the Secondary School,* Elbert K. Fretwell cites over 20 different examples of student council organization. The prize for complexity probably goes to the following:

"This organization includes roll-call rooms, council, student body organization, cabinet, self-government, and a board of finance. Each roll-call room has a teacher-adviser and elects a president, who is, *ex officio*, a member of the council, a secretary, a treasurer, and a

reporter for the weekly paper. Each room also elects eligible lists for the respective self-government committees and judiciary committees. The council is composed of some seventy-five roll-call room presidents, a representative elected by the teachers, the officers of the student body organization, some thirteen in number, and the principal. The council is the legislative body of the school. It elects the school historian, the managers of athletic and other school teams, and such officers as the constitution may require it to elect. It also provides for such committees as are contemplated by the constitution. The council meets weekly. "Self-government" supervises conduct on school grounds and in the building, luncheon lines, study halls (when desired), seating and order in assemblies, and the tardy desk. It also conducts trials by jury and imposes prescribed sentences through loss of merit credits for certain offenses. To carry on this work there are four committees: a boys' self-government committee and a jury committee, and a girls' self-government committee and a jury committe. Captains, managers, or presidents of the various organizations have seat and voice but no vote in the council. All pupils of the school are members of the student body organization. This body has the following officers: president, boys' vice president, girls' vice president, secretary, treasurer, auditor, editor of school paper, student body manager, president of boys' self-government committee, president of girls' self-government committee, girls' judge, boys' judge, and cadet major."

Very few people, even after reading this description *twice*, are apt to have any idea of what actually goes on in this school. Probably, a good many people *in* the school don't understand it either. One has visions of boards and committees tripping over each other and jamming up their own machine so badly that it will neither move forward nor backward and comes grinding to a bickering halt.

The odds are that your own school suffers from fragmented leadership and the jurisdictional disputes that have been built into your structure. Simplifying your structure can thus yield rich benefits in time saved.

With individual variations, the best council would include some form of homeroom representation in a voting assembly; some form of an executive council or cabinet composed of the student council officers and a few others; and appointed committees. The executive group sets up meetings and plans the agenda; the representative assembly decides policy; and committees are appointed to carry out policy. Anything beyond this bare model can result in spending too much time overcoming the complexity of the structure and not enough time getting work done.

(2) *Appropriateness.* A very important concept for the structure of activities is that they should grow out of the functions of each particular school program. A specific need for a board or committee

should be felt before that board or committee is established. The largest violation of this good sense is the popular concept that a student "government" should be a copy of state or national government. This is a mistake. Since state and national governments pass laws binding on all citizens, the process of lawmaking is designed to be slow, deliberate, and full of opportunities for minorities to block measures. A student council, on the other hand, is designed to set up programs, not pass laws; and it can often help many groups without hurting any others—thus, the minority veto is less important. Also, student councils are not supposed to teach how our government is run but, rather, to demonstrate the kinds of leadership and citizen skills needed to run a good government. The focus should not be on national or state government forms, but on leadership qualities.

Several years ago, I was asked to consult at a "constitutional convention" at a school which had developed a complex and detailed set of 51 rules for the convention. These rules dealt with everything from the election of members to the kind of caption which must be used on proposed revision. Part of this document follows:

PROPOSALS, SUBMISSIONS, AND INFORMATION

RULE 34. The regular order to be taken by proposals shall be as follows:

(a) Introduction, first reading, and printing of sufficient copies of each proposal.

(b) Reference to a General Standing Committee by the President.

(c) Report by Committee and printing of sufficient copies thereof.

(d) Second Reading: Consideration by the Convention and action on amendments offered by delegates.

(e) Third Reading and agreement.

(f) Reference to the Committee on Style for arrangement of sections and articles and for form.

RULE 36. Each proposal shall be typewritten on white paper which is 8½" wide and 11" long with one original copy and seven copies thereof, and shall be dated and signed by the introducer or by the Chairman of the Committee introducing it.

RULE 39. Each proposal shall be delivered to the Clerk for introduction. The Clerk shall number and list all proposals as presented. At each session of the Convention the Secretary shall ready the number and title of each proposal so delivered to him for introduction, which shall be taken as the first reading of the proposal and as the ordering thereof to a second reading, and the President shall thereupon refer it to a General Standing Committee.

Rule 41. A copy of each proposal introduced shall be delivered by the Secretary to the Committee on Accounts and Printing. The original shall be retained by the Clerk and one copy shall be delivered to the chairman of the Committee to which the proposal has been referred and one copy shall be delivered to the President.

Each successive reprint of a proposal differing from the previous print or reprint of the same proposal, which is presented to the Convention for consideration, shall bear a consecutive redraft number on the top of the first or title page thereof, as follows: "Redraft No. 1," or "RD. 1", "Redraft No. 2," or "RD. 2."

The point here is not that the rules are bad; but rather, that they are derived from a state government constitutional convention—not from the needs of the students in this particular high school. These four rules, and the 47 which accompanied them, did not serve to channel discussion but to discourage it. The student who might normally just stand up and say what he thinks is suddenly intimidated by 51 rules, and ruled out of order by the president because his idea is not typed out on 8½" x 11" paper and numbered by the clerk. He sits down, shrugs his shoulders, and says: "Never mind." The free exchange of ideas dies, strangled by red tape.

Fortunately the student council constitution in this school was a bit shorter, but it still required two readings to "enact a bill," and this included referrals to committees after the first reading, as well as referral to a legislative board. I asked one student how the system worked. He answered:

> Well, actually, you know, it's kind of fun, especially when you're a committee chairman and can veto things. You really feel you have power then, you know, you really do — you can kill a bill all by yourself. . .Not very many bills get through. . .Kind of hard sometimes to get things done. . . But we sort of enjoy the thing.

I feel that a better place to practice local or national government is in civics class or in student "model legislatures." These mock sessions may involve students' taking on the identity of specific senators or representatives, speaking views that the real congressmen would speak, and acting out government policy. In these mock sessions, the purpose is to learn the organization; in student council,

the purpose is to *use* the organization to accomplish other goals.

(3) *Flexibility.* Many school constitutions are so detailed that small changes in activities programs require constitutional amendments—or the ignoring of the constitution. Most new student councils want to "leave their stamp" on the council by changing its form in some way; this seems to be the reason the constitutional revision committees are standing, instead of special, committees in most schools. A sample of how detailed a student body code or constitution can get is the following:*

CODE – M.A.H.S. Div 5—AWARDS, TROPHIES, SWEATERS, PINS,
Chap. 3, Art. 1

Section CHAPTER II – SWEATERS
Article I-Standard Sweaters

596 Standard Sweater
There shall be a standard student sweater having the following specifications:
(1) Color: pearl gray.
(2) Cut: slip-over; round neck.

597 Purchase
Any student may purchase and wear the standard seater.

598 Emblems
Members in good standing of chartered campus clubs and organizations may wear their respective club emblems two inches below the neck band in the middle of the chest.

599
Club emblems may be either in chenille or embroidered felt according to the taste of the club, subject to the approval of the student body council.

599.01 Design
Each club shall design its own emblem, subject to the approval of the student body council.

* From *The Student Council: A Leadership Class*, by Lou McMonies and Genevieve McDermott, California, 1961.

599.02

All emblems of on-campus clubs shall be purple and gray, and white may be used as a minimum color when necessary. — Emblem Colors

599.03

All emblems may be interchangeable (optional). If interchangeable emblems are chosen, they must be fastened by a series of four or more snaps as approved by the student body council. — Emblem Fasteners

599.04

The emblems of all service and honor-service clubs shall be four inches in diameter for girls and five inches in diameter for boys. — Service Emblems

599.05

Members of honor-service clubs shall be entitled to wear a purple band at the neck of the sweater. — Honor Service

599.06

The emblem of all other chartered club shall be three inches in diameter. — Interest Club Emblems

599.07

Students who have been given an award for nonathletic interscholastic competition may wear the emblem awarded them two inches below the neck band. — Non-Athletic

That schools should even have such detailed rules strikes one as both humorous and pitiful. If such rules are really considered important enough to write down, they can be maintained as student council "policy" instead of being put into the school constitution. This would allow them to be changed or eliminated by a simple vote of the council, instead of involving vast amounts of time and verbage by presenting each small change to the student body and administration. The constitution doesn't have to include all the rules – just the important ones.

If constitutions are broad enough to allow year-to-year procedural changes, yet specific enough that "the spirit of the law" is easily discerned and agreed upon, we might save ourselves much time and effort that could better be devoted to improving our school communities.

(4) *Public Relations.* A last concern is that the constitution or structure of the council be easily understood. In a sense, the document is a public relations piece: it tells what the council hopes to do, and how. If the average student can't understand the structure, he is apt to feel that student council is only for organizational acrobats, and he will have little interest in joining those who walk tightropes between committees going nowhere.

CHAPTER SIX:

The Domain of the Student Council

One of the most troublesome problems facing advisers and administrators is: What should the student council be allowed to do? What should be its domain?

Perhaps a look into the past can give us some perspective. In 1951, former NASSP Director of Student Activities Gerald M. Van Pool delineated the following areas:

> . . .There should be three areas of influence in the high school: (1) The area which is given over completely to the student council, the area in which the principal says, in effect: "This is yours to control as you wish. There is one consideration, however, which you must always keep in mind and that is, if you fail, only those of you who are concerned will be affected. We cannot give you an area in which your failure will react unfavorably on the administration of the school." Some schools permit the student council to manage the entire social program of the school. If the program is a success, then the council and the students receive all the credit. If the program fails miserably, no serious harm will have been done to the school. . . (2) The second area is the largest: it is the area in which the students and faculty work together, co-operatively, on any number of school and community projects. This is the area in which most student councils are now working. . . (3) The third area is the one in which the student council has no right to legislate; the council keeps out of here. I might add that it is my firm belief that the students ought to have the right to express their opinion on *any* matter in school. As citizens, it is their right and sometimes their duty to make themselves heard. But that is as far as it goes. . . .*

*Gerald M. Van Pool, "The Three A's of the Student Council:" *Student Life*. Washington, D.C.: NASC, 1951.

23

This view has one potential flaw: it may give the student council control over nothing of importance. I asked a newly elected student leader to respond to the above quote, and he did as follows:

> They decided to give us an area of our own responsibility—but the things we are supposed to have control over are not *important* things. We get all the rinky-dinky stuff. They're saying in effect, 'You can do anything which is so unimportant that it doesn't matter to anybody whether or not you do it right! And anything *that* unimportant just isn't worth doing.
>
> Sure there's an area in which the student council has no right to legislate. And that's fine. I have no interest in running the school. It's a lot of red tape and angry parents and it's a big hassle.
>
> On the other hand, I've had enough of this "shared responsibility" stuff. What it means is that the administration decides, and then we do the work. Some sharing plan. . . !
>
> What we really need is something important to do, and then the freedom to go ahead and do it.

Another student complained to the author in this way:

> Right now, it's almost insulting. We get to put on dances, and put up posters—that's about it. And even then, the principal can veto when the dance is going to be, and who the band is going to be, and what we can charge, and who can come. And you can't put up a poster without a big stamp from the office that says: APPROVED, School Administration. Thrills.

The cry for power or control is in a sense a misleading cry among student leaders. Most student councils do not need legal power or control so much as they need energy, insight, time, and direction. Student councils need *participation* more than control—participation in evaluating teachers, curriculum, school facilities, school discipline. The student council needs to serve as the active student voice in the educational process. The student council needs to recommend changes, provide information to the school administration, set up activities, reach out to Silent Majority members. Student councils should exercise the power to persuade, the power to create. There is no inherent need for "legal authority" of any kind to accomplish these objectives.

The cry for power or control is more properly a problem of credibility—the credibility of the student council before the student body. If you wander in a high school corridor and ask students at random about their council, you will get three responses over and over again: (1) They never do anything. (2) They have no power. (3)

They just do what the principal wants. Students take student councils lightly because the council rarely if ever does anything which affects their lives in school. If ever it gets close to doing something "real," the administration shuts it off. The student council is seen as an appendage of the administration, little policemen, the rich kids, the playboys, the do-nothings. Although almost any important project in the school is really a "shared responsibility," this area is vulnerable because in the eyes of many students, this "cooperation" may be the sign of "copping out" instead of serving the student body.

Since the student council is designed to serve the student body, its work would be immeasurably enhanced if it could earn some respect and attention from the students it would like to serve. A clear-cut, well-defined area of control could be a tremendous shot in the arm for every council. If the student body knew that the council had final say in an area of concern to students at large, far more students would sit up and take notice; participation would increase; and the credibility of the council itself could be established.

Giving the student council more active control over its own affairs involves risks. But they are risks which might clear up some basic problems. Some educators have noticed, for example, that few student leaders seem to understand what it means to be accountable for their actions. But why should they feel accountable, if they don't see their decisions as really being their own? If we severely limit a student's range of choices, he feels less responsible for the choice itself, since it isn't the choice he wants to make. Let's say that the council wants to put on a music festival. "Well, you can't have it at night," the adviser says, "because the neighbors will complain. And you can't have it after school, because that will delay the buses going home. And you can't use the Idyllic Dance Company for your band, because the band we hired from them four years ago was an hour late in arriving. Students can't perform unless their acts are cleared in advance—two years ago, a student got up and sang a dirty song in a school assembly, and we can't have any of that. Don't put up posters any bigger than two feet by four feet. Oh, yes, you also can't . . . ."

On and on it goes: each comment the adviser makes is true enough, but the total effect is to immediately destroy the student's vision of a big, exciting project. When he ends up with one folk singer performing for 15 minutes on the senior patio during lunch, he can only say to himself: this isn't what *I* wanted to do. If he had gone ahead and tried to plan the big night, and gotten into some difficult snags, he might have ended up with his 15-minute folk singer anyway. But then he would have known, for himself, that it was the best he could do. The result would have been *his*. He would have experienced the chain of events which led inexorably to the

"no" which the adviser tried to force on him at the very beginning. He would have learned, instead of being told. And he could have defended the result to other students.

Some administrators have also noticed an immense *ennui* among even their most "successful" student leaders. This is part of the same problem. When we are too careful in controlling activities, we make them a bore. No success will seem like a success if it requires nothing special of the student council to make it so. How can student leaders feel the joy and satisfaction of success, if it isn't theirs? The principal and adviser have designed the success, and council members are expected to merely go through the motions. Without risks, without the excitement of the unknown and the creative challenge it provides, being a student council member is simple drudgery. "What are you going to do this year?" a student asks the council president. "The same thing we did last year," he answers. And then, realizing what an unsatisfactory answer that is, he adds, "Only, *better.*"

The student body isn't dumb, and it gets the word. It doesn't matter who the student body elects, because the same old programs will be done in the same old way, regardless. Elections quickly become unimportant beauty contests, with only 15 percent of the school voting. Instead of training students for a part in a dynamic democracy, we teach them that voting doesn't matter. Voters can afford to be apathetic. Noting is at stake.

Letting students "run wild" would be educationally shallow, because there are not enough staff members in most schools who could serve as "coaches" to hundreds of students going hundreds of different directions at once. The student council's inner dynamic could become too diffused, and contact with the student body could become fragmented. Our search, instead, must be for some restricted area which matters to students and which they can control; an enclave for action which can provide realistic experience and at the same time make it clear to both student leaders and constituents that something *is* at stake in the way the council behaves.

One thing which students generally care about and understand is money. Particularly *their own.* It is said that money doesn't motivate the younger generation, but any market report on the multi-million-dollar teen industry indicates that at least students are not backward about spending it. Furthermore, handling large sums of money is something which leaders in all parts of society must do, and do well. It may be that the student council budget, then, is the kind of educational enclave we're searching for.

It is certainly logical. A voluntary association of students elects its own officers to handle its own affairs. Its own affairs include its money. If the money is earned from student council projects, or if it is raised from student dues, it should be spent by the officers who were elected to spend it. Isn't this fair enough? "If you raise the

money," we tell the student council, "then it's yours, and you can spend it as you see fit."

Some of the money, of course, may come from the taxpayer. The taxpaper wants to make sure that his money is not being wasted. But money is only wasted when it results in little or no educational gain. The baseball team may break 50 bats each season, which seems wasteful, but we accept this as part of the process of learning. The student council may mishandle $200, which seems wasteful, but that too is part of the process of learning. The taxpayer wants a good product, and such losses may be part of the price we have to pay for success.

Legal situations vary, of course, from district to district and state to state. In general, all monies collected in the school, or in the school's name, are considered school funds and require the principal's approval before expenditure. But if the principal can use his approval to make sure than the council's house is in order, rather than vetoing particular projects, he can defend himself against his major vulnerability, the improper allocation and use of funds. The principal should make sure that the money is properly voted on, at a meeting correctly publicized, during which students have a chance to speak out on both sides of the issue. If the *process* has been orderly and fair, the odds are that the expenditure is legally defensible. The odds are also that the expenditure is what most of the student council members want. And if this is so, they ought to be allowed to see where their consensus takes them. The principal's approval means that he has "audited" the council's procedure, without "censoring" its content.

The enclave can, and should, include other indigenous matters such as the running of student elections and the chartering of school clubs. Most schools would also give the council full responsibility for the school's social program. The purpose of the enclave is not to limit all council activity to one area, but to provide one area in which council activities are not limited. The council will continue to share some areas with the administration, and merely advise in others.

The enclave theory will be false if we don't make sure that students face the music. We have to be careful not to have a double standard, here. If a parent calls up and is angry about a speaker that the council has invited on campus, the council should have to reply and defend its position, not the principal. If a loud night-time dance upsets the neighborhood, the council should do the apologizing, not the adviser. If students are to be given the freedom to act, they must be on the front lines when the flak begins to fill the air.

A pop-art poster of Batman reads: "It is well to remember that evil is a pretty bad thing." Students have to learn that for themselves. If we inform and advise, instead of censor and limit,

most students will learn it quickly enough on their own. It is important to remember that students may want to succeed on their own terms, but they *do* want to *succeed*. The special incentive of the enclave system is that students, should their efforts fail, will be making a mess of their own activities. And no student leader wants to do that.

As students enjoy more and more responsibility and control in their own affairs, they are more likely to be satisfied with the administration and faculty having responsibility and control over *theirs*. The administration will participate in the activities program by offering opinions and advice, and the student council will participate in matters of teaching, curriculum, and school facilities by giving *their* opinions and advice. Legal control for the operation of the school remains in the hands of the principal; active control over the activities program in the school remains in the hands of the student council.*

* See "The Principal and the Student Council." Kent M. Keith. *The Bulletin* of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, September, 1971, pp. 66-74.

CHAPTER SEVEN:

Dealing with the Supermen

One of the problems which plague most student councils is that its leaders tend to be cast from the same mold. Student council officers typically come from the more well-to-do homes and have distinguished themselves in either intellectual or athletic activities – or both. They have acquired definite skills in speaking, writing, and appearing in public. Underground newspapers often criticize them for being white Anglo-Saxon protestant upper-middle-class bourgeois. And very often, that critique is correct.*

The "problem" of the outstanding student would be no problem at all, were it not for the side effects. One side effect is that student councils are so homogeneous, their members so much like each other, that they forget they are only a small part of the school. Even the best student council may only represent 10 percent of the school in its attitudes and interests. This makes it very easy for them to put on activities which they enjoy – but the other 90 percent of the school does not. Faced with a lack of response, the student council complains about student body "apathy." The problem, of course, is student council *relevance.***

A second side effect is that these outstanding students often become the school's "supermen." They hold many leadership positions, with the result that other students have fewer leadership opportunities, and the supermen have too little time to spend on any one job. Informal counts taken by me at a dozen schools in Massachusetts, California, and Hawaii indicated that each student council officer held a minimum of three other elected positions. These other positions tended to be in school clubs, including athletics.***

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* See Allan A. Glatthorn's *The Principal and the Student Council.* Washington, D.C.: NASC, 1968. 48 pp.

** See Kent M. Keith's *The Silent Majority: The Problem of Apathy and the Student Council. Op. cit.*

*** See also Elbert K. Fretwell's *Extra-Curricular Activities in the Secondary School,* Chapter I, *Op. cit.,* for older statistics.

In many cases, it is said that a few students dominate the entire leadership structure of the school because "no one else wants to do the work." What this may really mean is that no one else feels confident enough to challenge the well-entrenched student leaders. Many students do not run for an office which they would cherish, because they sense certain defeat in running against a well-known student. If this student were prohibited from running, others might fill the vacuum.

At the same time, it seems wrong to limit in any way the drive and energies of the few students who thrive on activities and execute their responsibilities so well. As a high school student, I held down an average of five leadership positions each year. My view at this time was that "if you want to get something done, give it to a busy man." I also felt that "the student voter should be able to choose among all students for the leader he wants in each given position. He alone should be the judge of whether or not a person is too busy with other activities to accept or handle a new one."

If the goal were simply to get things done, it might be better given to busy people. The goal, however, is to teach students leadership and citizenship skills as they do things – and thus success would be better measured by how many students grow, than by how many tasks are ticked off the list. The idea that student voters should not be shackled in choosing whomever they choose also has a weakness. If the activities program is viewed as curricular, there is no reason we cannot limit elective positions just as we limit elective courses.

Many energized student leaders are just beginning to flex their muscles, testing their abilities, seeing how heavy a load they can carry without crashing. Thus they collect jobs, adding to their self-image, their college application form, and the sheer challenge of somehow getting through a "36-hour day." Usually, such student careers are studded with late homework assignments, conflicting schedules for meetings, unfinished projects, and a "minimum strategy" which results from having too much to do to do it all well. Never really prepared or in control, they race through the day, leaving only an echo of excuses which we accept because "everyone knows how busy they are."

The alternative is to develop depth, instead of breadth, in the student leader's experience. This is far more difficult, being the idea man, the parliamentary strategist, the executive, the trouble-shooter, the peacemaker, the advocate, the one who follows through. When you are the president of a club which meets infrequently, it is easy to simply preside, or provide enough face-saving rhetoric to last until the next meeting. When you have only one job, and have to pour all your energies into it and it alone, a much higher quality experience is possible.

Some schools have tried to enforce this kind of preferable experience by setting up restrictions in the form of a point system. A certain number of points are assigned to each position and the total is limited. For example, the student body president might be five points, a cheerleader three points, a club president two points, and so on, with any given student allowed only five points in any one school year. The plan is to make students choose the one or two things that are the most important to them, leaving their lesser interests open for other students to develop. Notice that the limitations are on official leadership positions, with participation being unlimited on the membership level.

The problem of the supermen may have no good solution. It seems wrong to limit individual potential, and it also seems wrong for a few students to monopolize a large number of positions they really have no time for. For many advisers, the balance is tipped by knowing that a limitation code could benefit 20 or 30 students each year who would like to hold positions now dominated by just a handful of students. If student support can be developed, the initiation of such a plan by council members would be most effective. If the date for the change-over were set a year in the future, it would give students more time to choose and maneuver and decide where their priorities lie.

CHAPTER EIGHT:

Legalities, Salaries, and Standards

Legally, the activities program has earned some status as being extracurricular, but not as yet as being co-curricular. The public has occasionally challenged the expenditure of school funds for extracurricular activities, on the grounds that they are not part of the regular school curriculum and thus the schools are not authorized to use tax-derived funds to support them. Citizens have challenged the authority of schools to build stadiums, supply uniforms for basketball and football teams, and provide transportation for extracurricular activities. Some taxpayers have even attempted to keep school districts from holding certain extracurricular events in their existing school buildings – events such as athletics, dances, and other social activities. In general, the courts have upheld the right of school districts to provide funds and facilities for extracurricular activities as a school function.

There have been some questions about the legal status of funds which are received as proceeds from extracurricular activities. Since they are not tax revenues, it has been questioned if they are to be considered public funds, in the custody of the board of education. In general, the answer is yes: extracurricular funds belong to the school district and are to be handled according to the district's own procedures.

There is some question whether a school district is involved in a proprietary function when it makes a profit in some extracurricular activity (a proprietary function is a function of the individual school which is not regarded as a governmental duty). If it is a proprietary function, then even in states where governmental immunity is the rule, courts may allow the recovery of damages in tort liability cases (liability cases dealing with a private or civil wrong which does not grow out of a contractual obligation). The majority of courts have ruled that boards of education are operating in their governmental capacity when they support enterprises which produce funds for extracurricular activities; however, the courts have not established

any clear legal principle for distinguishing between governmental and proprietary functions.

School boards can make rules and regulations which prohibit certain students from taking part in the full school program, if such prohibitions are in the best interests of the school as a whole, and if they are "reasonable." The two aspects of the extracurricular program most often challenged are prohibitions against secret societies and the participation of married students. Both prohibitions have been upheld by the courts. There is some judicial disagreement over restricting married students to classroom activities, solely on the basis of their marital status. The Supreme Court of Iowa made the distinction between those of lawful age who enter into marriage, and those who are under age. Although the law favors marriage as a social institution, those who are under age were deemed to be a special case. The prohibitions against married students have been upheld in all cases, but dissenting views have been growing.

Teachers have challenged the authority of school boards to assign them to extra duties unrelated to their professional teaching fields for which there is no extra compensation. The Pennsylvania Supreme Court ruled that a board of education could assign teachers duties for which they were properly qualified and certified – and their failure to perform these duties could result in their dismissal. A New York court ruled that a board of education could fix the hours of a teacher, including evening hours, if the assigned activity were related to the teacher's field of certification. A California court ruled that a teacher's duties extend beyond the classroom and that assignments such as supervising at athletic games without compensation are within the board's power when such assignments are reasonable and distributed impartially. In a more recent Pennsylvania case, the Supreme Court of that state ruled that a teacher may be assigned extra duties only if the activity is related to the school program.*

It is not surprising that teachers should seek help from the courts for their assignment to activities for which they receive no pay. The student council adviser, in particular, gives an immense number of free hours each year. According to the *National Education Association Bulletin* (see page 33), the mean maximum scheduled supplement to salaries was $1,157 for a head coach, $673 for a band director, and $384 for a newspaper adviser in 1969–70. The student council adviser is not even on the list. In principle, the superviser of the activities program is on a par with the head coach; but it would be

*The above section was condensed from Dr. J. David Mohler's article "Legal Problems Related to Extracurricular Activities," proceedings of the National Organization on Legal Problems in Education, 1967. See also *Law of Extracurricular Activities in Secondary Schools*, by J. David Mohler and Edward C. Bolmeier. Cincinnati, Oh.: W. H. Anderson Co., 1968. 185 pp.

difficult to find a school where the council adviser is given anywhere near as much money as a salary supplement. The creation of a full-time activities director post would mean that at least the adviser would have his salary attached to a single job, instead of two. At present, most school districts give the adviser an extra hour or two free from class duties during the day to allow for the time spent advising activities. Since so much of the activities program takes place after school, however, a salary supplement of $600 per year seems a modest demand for an adviser to make.

The adviser should also request adequate arrangements for the student council itself. The council should have its own room, perhaps the size of a classroom, where it can store supplies, have meetings, and keep its files. This room should have its own phone and duplicating machine, and it should be accessible to council officers and appointed committee members as their tasks require. The executive council should also have a free period each day, during which students can make contact with individuals in the school or hold small meetings. This is important, since most of the people whom the council will need to contact are only available during the working day. Finally, there should be an activities period each week during which the full student council can meet to consider the progress of committees and make new proposals.

The recent willingness of the public to turn down school bond issues and limit school budgets means that salary supplements and facilities for the student council will be difficult to obtain. Some school districts have so little faith in the activities program that they have chosen to cut it out completely as their "solution" to the budget problem. This means that now, more than ever, the philosophy of activities must be heard, and the concept of full support for adviser and council alike must be defended. California has a state association of directors of activities: organizations such as this could lobby for the needed changes.

—MEAN MAXIMUM SUPPLEMENTS TO TEACHER'S SALARY SCHEDULES, 1967-68 and 1969-70[a]

	Mean maximum scheduled supplement		Percent of increase
	1967-68	1969-70	
PUPIL-PARTICIPATING COMPETITIVE SPORTS			
Head coach (or only coach)	$1,009	$1,157	14.7%
Football	972	1,135	16.8
Athletic director	896	1,052	17.4
Basketball	858	991	15.5
Hockey	622	884	42.1
Track	617	725	17.5
Wrestling	576	712	23.6
Baseball	593	707	19.2
Equipment manager	541	677	25.1
Soccer	505	664	31.5
Swimming	527	643	22.0
Gymnastics	476	594	24.8
Intramural sports	439	475	8.2
Cross country	366	460	25.7
Water polo	367	447	21.8
Tennis	359	442	23.1
Rifle	374	436	16.6
Golf	322	396	23.0
Bowling	285	357	25.3
Cheerleaders	268	352	31.3
Softball	275	248	−9.8
PUPIL-PARTICIPATING NONATHLETIC ACTIVITIES			
School band	614	673	9.6
Director of music	524	550	5.0
Instrumental music	470	546	16.2
Vocal music	424	486	14.6
Director of dramatics	387	453	17.1
Debating	373	441	18.2
Yearbook	359	423	17.8
Newspaper	353	384	8.8
Production of play(s)	314	378	20.4
Magazine	180	292	62.2

[a]For reporting systems with enrollments of 6,000 or more; 523 schedules were analyzed for 1967-68 and 489 for 1969-70. Many schedules provide supplements for several activities.

NEA Research Bulletin, Vol. 48, No. 2, May, 1970.

CHAPTER NINE:

Books, Conventions, and Workshops

BOOKS

Resource materials in the student council f eld are not plentiful. In particular, effective audiovisual aids are rare. It is hoped that the 1970's will produce a number of new materials, because the existing books and pamphlets are outdated and because students seem more quickly attuned to films and simulations than to reading.

Two old standards worth looking into are:

Democracy and Education by John Dewey (New York: MacMillan Co., 1916). This book is one you have probably come across in your education courses, but it is interesting to read with the activities program in mind. After all these years, it is still the foundation for the concepts and theories which justify and explain the role of the activities program in our schools. Of special interest are the sections on learning by doing, learning through shared experience, the reconstruction of experience, and the need for the younger generation to take a new path so that a society can continue to grow.

Extra-Curricular Activities in the Secondary School by Elbert K. Fretwell (Cambridge, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin, Riverside Press, 1931). This book, though published 40 years ago, is still in many respects ahead of its time. Fretwell was a teacher and high school principal before becoming a professor at the Teacher's College at Columbia University. There he inspired many graduate students who subsequently published materials of their own. Among them and those who followed, he has been known as "the master." This book is 540 pages, including 60 pages of bibliography.

Fretwell comes through with the charm of Mr. Chips. He had a firm belief in students, and a sense of excitement appropriate to a pioneer in the student activities field. The book draws heavily on case studies, which might seem tedious were it not for the sprinkling of delightful theory and philosophy which permeate them. Fretwell's philosophy of the homeroom and the school club is

particularly interesting, since these are two aspects of the modern high school which have often gone astray.

The National Association of Student Councils has produced a large number of publications. Special attention should be given to:

Student Life Highlights. NASC's monthly newsletter/magazine, *Highlights* is free to NASC members and available on subscription to all others. In the last few years, *Highlights* has become impressively contemporary in its discussions, drawing on the talents of students, advisers, and administration alike. It is the only good link to the latest in the activities field, and worth a private subscription even if your school receives a copy as an NASC member.

New Directions Series. Since 1963, NASC has been publishing a series of books averaging 50 pages in length, which have dealt with many aspects of school activities. Of special note are:

A Call to Order (1964) by Donald I. Wood. This book is easy to read and understand, which is a lot to say for a parliamentary procedure book. If your student council is supposed to be run by *Robert's Rules of Order*, the odds are you either don't use it, or you get hopelessly lost in its ambiguity. This book is complete enough and plain enough to be a good substitute for *Robert's*.

Improving Student Participation (1966) by Grace Graham. This book is a thoughtful account of the problem of student involvement in activities, the high school dropout, and student needs in regard to peer group approval and faculty attention. The chapter on the adviser's role is excellent.

The Principal and the Student Council (1968) by Allan A. Glatthorn. One of the more recent books, this one analyzes student moods and attitudes and makes some predictions for the future direction of student activities. Probably the only weakness in the book is the description of privileges that might be extended to student council officers as a way to enhance the council's image: these short passages would be criticized by many students as being too "Madison Avenue" and "cliquish" in their side effects. Otherwise, this book is very much to the point, remarkably open-minded, and worth your time.

The Silent Revolution: Dynamic Leadership in the Student Council (1968) by Kent M. Keith. This book is written specifically for high school student leaders, recommending leadership techniques which can be used to bring about peaceful change on our campuses. The basic thesis is that working through the system is infinitely easier than beating one's head against it – and infinitely easier on one's head, also.

The Silent Majority: The Problem of Apathy and the Student Council (1971) by Kent M. Keith. A companion to *The Silent Revolution*, this book discusses the problem of student councils which are not relevant to the interests and needs of their student

bodies, and hence are not reaching the vast majority of students on their campuses. The thesis is that the student council can reach members of the silent majority on an individual basis, and in doing so, discover the kinds of activities which would be most beneficial to the different groups on campus.

The Student Council Handbook. This 1967 NASC production is a series of essays on all the major aspects of the high school student council. It is a successor to an earlier series of handbooks, such as the 1962 edition of *The Student Council in the Secondary School*, which was a full 400 pages in length, including 200 pages of suggested student council projects. The current *Handbook* is a streamlined version which is more apt to be read in its entirety. The projects are preserved in a New Directions book, *A Guide to Student Council Projects* (1971).

For a more complete list of NASC materials, write to NASC at 1201 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

The National Association of Secondary School Principals is the parent organization for NASC, and two of its many publications would be of special interest: *The Reasonable Exercise of Authority* (1969) by Robert L. Ackerly, describing recent court cases and their effect on the rights of students and the authority of administrators; and *How Students Rate Their Schools and Teachers* (1971), a collection of frank quotations collected by Gordon A. Sabine in a survey of high school students.

Lifelines for Leaders (1969) edited by Earl Reum, is a book of inspirational quotes, poems, and humorous insights compiled over the years as a result of the Camp Cheley workshops in Colorado. Previously published under the title *Little Leads to Leadership*, it is available through the Thomas J. Pickley Agency, Inc., 6113 East Colfax Avenue, Denver, Colorado. A fine resource for speakers and workshop leaders; enjoyable browsing.

Student Council Compass (1969) by Dale Richmond, Earl Reum, and Margaret Thoren. This book is a compilation of some of the better materials used by these authors and others at workshops and discussion groups. The scope is wide – council purposes and projects, foundations of student participation, council management, parliamentary procedure, public relations, evaluation, leadership, and the adviser. The book's strength is that it serves as a "forum" of diverse ideas in the student council field. It is published by the Ohio Association of Student Councils, 288 East Washington St., Chagrin Falls, Ohio 44022.

CONVENTIONS AND WORKSHOPS

The National Association of Student Councils has been holding a national conference each June in different sections of the country.

The conference runs about four days and is attended by students from nearly all 50 states. Its strengths are obvious: meeting students and advisers from other states, learning "how the other guy does it," hearing national leaders speak or lead discussion groups, and travelling to new places and new experiences. The disadvantages are that the trip is always costly and benefits fewer people than if the money were spent at home; and the host school, intent on "showing everyone a good time," provides a full schedule of banqueting, partying, and sightseeing – often at the expense of work on student council matters.

Most states have an annual convention of the state student council association; some have two. Conventions occuring in the fall generally focus on school problems, state projects, and internal communications. Those in the spring tend to organize themselves around the election of state officers for the following year.

State conventions which occur in late October or early November can be important and timely. Officers have begun their school year and should have identified in the first month or six weeks what their major problems are. A convention which draws high calibre resource people and materials, and focuses its discussions on school problems, can be of immense help. It is late enough in the year to know what the problems are, but not so late that people feel they don't have time to do anything about it.

State conventions occuring in the spring often include state elections—to the exclusion of almost everything else. In many states, the spring convention is much like a beauty pageant, with all of the sighing and sobbing and tense competition that mark such affairs. In some states, the election is complete with special hats, banners, posters, cheers, and special outfits. It is not clear what the effects of this expensive campaigning are, but I suspect that students are often more interested in being elected than in serving after the election is over. Perhaps less hoopla would attract students slightly less photogenic and slightly more interested in serving.

One of the constant cries at a convention on the national or state level is that "your problems aren't our problems." Particularly in large states, there may be marked differences between urban and more rural sections—for example, upstate New York vs. New York City; Chicago vs. southern Illinois; northern California vs. San Francisco-L.A.-San Diego. The importance of a smaller district is that it can focus (1) on its own characteristic problems, (2) in groups small enough to be less confusing, and (3) in geographic areas small enough to make meetings and general communications more practical than on a state level. For these reasons, the district is the real potential "workhorse" in the student council field.

The difference between a convention and a workshop is "instruction." Workshops are designed for the exchange of ideas, but

they also attempt to teach—through the reading and discussion of written materials, through lectures, through participation in hypothetical situations. Workshops are usually five days long, held at a college or camp facility with dormitory and cafeteria services and athletic fields. Students meet in their own groups, called councils, for discussion. Assemblies consist of lectures, forums, and debates, plus occasional audiovisual materials, and feedback sessions relating to assignments or group tasks. There are approximately 80 workshops across the nation each summer. At last count, Ohio took the lead with eight sessions; Texas, seven; and Indiana, six.

Certainly, there are excellent conventions, and there are terrible workshops. The difference in the goals of the two, however, is worth noting. Workshops tend to emphasize student leader growth and skills, through input from educators, resource materials, and practice during the season. Conventions tends to emphasize current events and exchange of views. In a decade of change and unrest, the growth of student leader personalities and skills will probably have more to do with their capabilities to meet problems than their knowledge that other schools have those problems. Just keeping up with the news is no way to get ahead of it.

PART FOUR: THE FUTURE

CHAPTER TEN:

Give Hope to a Generation

We know that society is becoming more complex. What we do *not* know is whether or not we will develop the ideas and leadership techniques which can control this complexity. As technology proceeds to remove life from human experience, as architecture proceeds to remove life from the human scale, and computers proceed to remove life from human comprehension, the question is easily asked: Are events leading us by the nose, or can we take them by the horns?

To many young people looking at their world today, the situation seems hopeless. Businesses are too powerful, bureaucracies too big, and politics too corrupt to expect that problems will be solved. The power of the individual, according to this view, is nearly nil. He can only retreat inside and attempt to establish control over his own private life, his own psyche and emotions—a world on the human scale, between him and a few individuals, or alone. Students, believing they cannot affect their society in a positive way, seek to create little islands of their own in what is seen as a dark and indifferent sea.

Much is said about the pessimism and cynicism of the younger generation. This may be a misinterpretation. Young people do have strong beliefs and hopes – but the objects of belief are changing. America's physical frontiers have almost finished expanding; Horatio Alger stories have been swallowed by rows of identical gray flannel business suits in amalgamated industries; and being President is humanly impossible. The old frontiers look less attractive—but the frontier of the individual's internal life, his thoughts and feelings, remains largely unexplored, can be comprehended or at least participated in, and thus easily becomes a new center of focus. Where the material has become dull, the spiritual takes on new significance.

Of course, not all students have thrown in the political towel. There have always been, and always will be, those who seek to directly change their political and social environment. What are their prospects today? Young leaders are often operating on blind faith, at

best, or a sense of existential futility in acting out their roles, at worst. The "cure" for this, if there is one, is definite proof that the individual in our society still has the power to affect the course of events in his world.

The activities program in America's secondary schools can be a part of that proof. Leaders can be told that they have the power to do good, that the system can respond to their efforts, that change can be timely and relevent—but it takes actual experience on their part to make those words believable. Today's student leader who believes that working through the system, *with* people, is effective will be asked by his peers: "What makes you think so?" To back up that belief he needs examples – personal examples – of success. It is of paramount importance that we create the environment in which those experiences can occur – the atmosphere in which students are trusted instead of blocked, and encouraged instead of stalled – for high school is a period in which many students are making up their minds about the world they live in.

We want them to decide in a positive way. For that to happen, we need to guide, instead of control, so that students will know that their successes and failures are indeed their own. We need to focus student council activities on the school, where they have the best chance to make a meaningful contribution. We need to simplify our organizational structures, and make them more appropriate and more flexible, so that they are vehicles through which action flows instead of dams and whirlpools which stop or confuse action. We need to stake out a particular area with the activities program over which the student council has complete control. We need to keep more leadership posts open for more students; and we need to teach student leaders how to reach their student bodies. One stimulus to this growth can be effective workshops and relevant reading material. But the main stimulus will always be the personal example and concern of the activities adviser himself.

There are students who want to lead, who want to affect their world in a constructive way. An effective activities program can teach them how to organize, how to discuss, how to think through and present programs and ideas. If it also teaches that reasonable proposals will be reasonably accepted, if it also teaches that peaceful techniques are highly valued and can be effective, then we may in no small way be able to give hope to a generation.

About the Author

Kent M. Keith is a 1970 graduate of Harvard University, currently studying as a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford University, Oxford, England.

As a senior at Roosevelt High School in Honolulu, he founded the Hawaii Student Leadership Institute, the official student council workshop for the state. During his four years as session director, the workshop was designed and staffed entirely by students.

While at Harvard, Kent served as student council adviser at Rindge Technical School, Cambridge, Mass.; as a part-time teacher at Newton High School, Newton, Mass.; and as a consultant to the San Diego City Schools in California. During the summer of 1971, he was on the staff of NASC in Washington, D.C.

Kent Keith has given nearly one hundred speeches at student council conventions, workshops, and high schools across the country. In addition, he has authored *The Silent Revolution* and *The Silent Majority*, two booklets in the NASC New Directions series, and has written numerous articles for *Student Life Highlights* and other educational publications.